

Excerpts from U.S. Department of Education, State and Local Implementation of the No Child Left Behind Act, Vol VIII, Teacher Quality Under NCLB: Final Report, 2009,
<http://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/teaching/nclb-final/report.pdf>

I. INTRODUCTION

Ensuring that every child is taught by a highly qualified teacher is a central feature of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)*, the most recent reauthorization of the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (ESEA)*. *NCLB* “recognizes that teacher quality is one of the most important factors in improving student achievement and eliminating achievement gaps.”

Title I of *NCLB* requires states to set standards for all public school teachers to be highly qualified. The requirements apply to all teachers of core academic subjects and to teachers of limited English proficient (LEP) students and students with disabilities. Title II, Part A, of *NCLB* provides funds that states can use to support a wide variety of efforts to improve the qualifications of teachers, from improving certification systems to supporting efforts to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers. Title I and several other programs authorized under *NCLB* provide funds to support ongoing professional development for all teachers. By setting requirements and providing support for teachers to become highly qualified, *NCLB*’s provisions are intended to ensure that all students are taught by teachers with needed subject matter knowledge who are teaching in their areas of expertise.

This report describes the ways in which states, districts, and schools are implementing the teacher qualification provisions of *NCLB* and analyzes the progress the nation is making toward the goal of having a highly qualified teacher in every classroom. The report also describes the actions that states, districts, and schools are taking to improve teacher qualifications, such as recruiting and retaining highly qualified teachers, providing support to those who are not highly qualified, and providing teachers with professional development. Finally, the report analyzes implementation of the law’s provisions to ensure that Title I paraprofessionals are qualified. This report builds on an earlier report on the implementation of *NCLB*’s teacher qualification provisions; companion reports address *NCLB* implementation and progress in the areas of accountability, Title I school choice and supplemental educational services, and targeting and resource allocation.

OVERVIEW OF TEACHER AND PARAPROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATION PROVISIONS OF NCLB

NCLB goes beyond prior reauthorizations of the *ESEA* in its emphasis on teachers—the need for teachers to have subject matter knowledge, the critical role of sharing information about teacher qualifications, and the breadth of activities allowable to improve teacher qualifications. The law’s provisions rest on three key premises: (1) setting requirements for the qualifications of teachers will help identify those teachers who do not have adequate subject matter knowledge; (2) widely available information about teachers who are not highly qualified will prompt states, districts, schools, and parents to take actions to improve teacher qualifications; and (3) the actions taken to support better teachers—such as providing teachers with professional development or stepping up efforts to recruit highly qualified teachers—will improve teacher qualifications and the quality of their teaching (see Exhibit 1). Similar premises underlie the provisions for paraprofessional qualifications. *NCLB* provides many sources of support for helping teachers and paraprofessionals to meet the law’s requirements and for improving the knowledge and skills of the teacher workforce more generally.

Exhibit 1

NCLB Strategies for Improving Teacher Quality

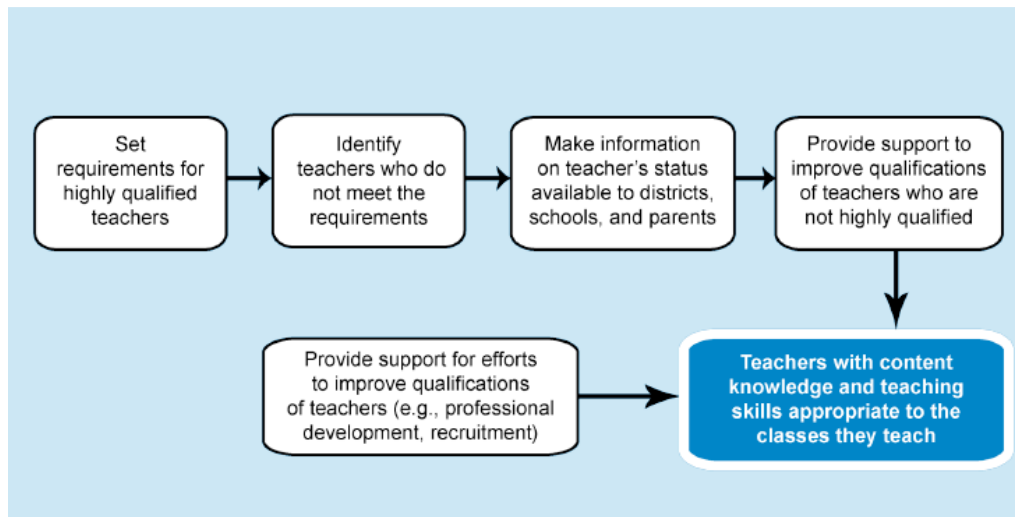


Exhibit reads: The above characterizes the sequence of key requirements of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001* related to highly qualified teachers.

Source: Public Law 107-110, Jan. 8, 2002

Set requirements for teacher and paraprofessional qualifications

While *NCLB* sets basic requirements for teachers to be designated as highly qualified and for paraprofessionals to be designated as qualified, states determine many of the specifics.

Requirements for highly qualified teachers

The *NCLB* requirements for designating teachers as highly qualified focus in large part on demonstrating subject matter knowledge, and differ somewhat for new teachers compared with existing teachers, and for elementary compared with secondary teachers.

- *NCLB* requires that states implement plans under which all teachers of core academic subjects were to be highly qualified by the end of the 2005–06 school year. In October 2005, the Department declared that states would not be penalized for not reaching this goal provided that they were implementing the law and making a good-faith effort to ensure that there was a highly qualified teacher in every classroom. In general, a highly qualified teacher must have state certification and at least a bachelor's degree and must have demonstrated subject competency in each core academic subject that he or she teaches (Title IX, Part A, Section 9101(23)).

Demonstrating competency differs for new teachers and existing teachers, and by grade level:

- New elementary teachers must demonstrate competency by passing a rigorous state test in reading, writing, mathematics, and other areas of the basic elementary school curriculum.
- Elementary teachers not new to the profession must pass a rigorous state test or demonstrate subject matter competency through a High Uniform Objective State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSSE) process developed by their state.
- New secondary teachers must have passed a state test in each subject they teach, completed an academic major or course work equivalent, acquired an advanced degree in the subject(s) taught, or obtained advanced certification.

- Secondary teachers not new to the profession must pass a rigorous state test, complete an academic major, a graduate degree, course work equivalent to an undergraduate academic major, advanced certification, or demonstrate subject matter competency through a High Uniform Objective State Standard of Evaluation (HOUSSE) process developed by their state.
- *NCLB* requires that teachers who primarily teach LEP students or students with disabilities must meet these same requirements if they teach core academic subjects to these students. These teachers also must meet additional requirements appropriate to the special needs of their students. However, these are not requirements for teachers to be considered highly qualified under *NCLB*.
 - Teachers who teach in programs for LEP students funded under Title III of *NCLB* must have fluency in English and any other language in which they provide instruction, including written and oral communication skills (Title III, Part A, Section 3116(c)).
 - Teachers who teach students with disabilities must have full state certification as special education teachers, as required by the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* (*IDEA*, Title I, Part A, Section 602(10)).